

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AGR-20 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-11 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 SPC-03 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 OPR-02

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04 PRS-01 SS-20

USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 CU-04 OC-06 CCO-00 /187 W

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P 221140Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9178

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 1059

ISLAMABAD AND KARACHI FOR AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, ITE

SUBJECT: CIVIL STRIFE CONTINUES UNABATED

SUMMARY: POPULAR DEMONSTRATIONS OVER FOOD GRAIN PRICES AND SCARCITIES HAVE CONTINUED UNABATED IN SEVERAL AREAS, NOTABLY IN GUJARAT, CULMINATING IN POLICE FIRING AND FATALITIES. JUTE AND TEXTILE WORKERS REMAINED AWAY FROM WORK, BUT OTHER STRIKES APPEARED NEARER SETTLEMENT. THE CONGRESS BROKE EVEN PUWLKEL RAJASTHAN BY-ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. OPPOSITION-BACKED ANTI-PRICE-RISE DEMONSTRATIONS AND "BANDHS" IN GUJARAT CONTINUED INTO THEIR THIRTEENTH DAY JANUARY 21,
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WITH TWO KILLED AND EIGHT INJURED BY POLICE FIRING IN SURAT.

RIOTERS' TARGETS INCLUDED GRAIN DEPOTS AND POLICE STATIONS. CURFEW HAS BEEN CLAMPED ON SEVERAL SAURASHTRA TOWNS, ESPECIALLY IN RAJKOT DISTRICT, AND ON AHMEDABAD AND BARODA. THE PROVINCIAL ARMED CONSTABULARY, CENTRE RESERVE POLICE, AND BORDER SECURITY FORCES HAVE LARGELY ASSUMED THE TASK OF MAINTAINING ORDER; THE ARMY HAS BEEN ALERTED BUT NOT YET CUDVILLED OUT, ACCORDING TO THE BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US. CONGEN BOMBAY CITSF THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROCURE AND DISTRIBUTE GRAIN FROM THE CURRENT BUMPER CROP AS THE "ROOT CAUSE" OF THE DISTURBANCES, OF WHICH IT FORESEES "NO EARLY END".

2. A JANUARY 21 "BIHAR BANDH" SPONSORED BY THE CPI, OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, AND TRADEUNIONS WAS FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL. NORMAL ACTIVITY HALTED IN PATNA, GAYA, AND A FEW OTHER TOWNS, ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, BUT PRODUCTION IN THE SOUTH BIHAR INDUSTRIAL BELT WAS LARGELY UNAFFECTED. DEMONSTRATORS PROTESTING THE NON-AVAILABILITY OF GRAIN AND OTHER ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES BURNED CHIEF MINISTER GHAFOR IN EFFIGY. ABOUT A HALF-DOZEN PATNA DEMONSTRATORS WERE INJURED IN PLIICE FIRING. ILPI YOUTH IN CALCUTTA REPORTEDLY RANSACKED THE BENGAL NATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICES ON JANUARY 21, LOOKING--IN VAIN--FOR RICE MILL OWNERS TO KILL. IN CHANDIGARH, OPPOSITION-BACKED STUDENTS PROTESTING THE JANUARY 18 "POLICE REPRESSION" AND FIRING ON STUDENTS RAIDED THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE JANUARY 21, FOLLOWING WHICH PANJAB UNIVERSITY WILL BE CLOSED FOR FOUR DAYS. THE POLICE USED TEAR GAS AND LATHI CHARGES BUT ONE WAS KILLED.

3. LABOR AS USUAL IS RESTIVE AND UNPREDICTABLE. RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS CALLED OFF THEIR WILDCAT STRIKE FOLLOWING AMBIGUOUS GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS EXPANDING GRIEVANCE MACHINERY AND INTRODUCING SHORTER SHIFTS. THE LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION EMPLOYEES' PARTIAL STRIKE AND LOCKOUT CONTINUES AMID CONFUSED MANEUVERING BY UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT. ALMOST ALL INDIAN AIRLINES (IAC) EMPLOYEESHAVE RETURNED TO WORK ON MANAGEMENT'S TERMS; IAC NOW CLAIMS THAT ALL BUT 20 PERCENT OF SCHEDULED FLIGHTS ARE BEING FLOWN. DELHI NURSES RETURNED TO WORK JANUARY 19 AFTER RECEIVING SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS. THE DELHI INTERNS' STRIKE, NOW IN ITS THIRD WEEK, ASSUMED LARGER DIMENSIONS WITH THE JANUARY 21 THREAT BY THE YOUNG DOCTORS' NATIONAL FEDERATION TO CALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A NATIONWIDE STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DELHI COLLEAGUES. STRIKES BY BOMBAY TEXTILE WORKERS AND BENGAL JUTE WORKERS-- INVOLVING ALMOST HALF A MILLION LABORERS AND UNDERMINING INDIAN EXPORT EFFORTS--APPEAR NO NEARER RESOLUSOLUTION.

4. AS THE PRIME MINISTER RECOVERED IN NEW DELHI FROM A COLD CAUGHT CAMPAIGNING IN UTTAR PRADESH (UP), THE CONGRESS TOOK SOME COMFORT FROM THE RESULTS OF THE TWO JANUARY 20 RAJASTHAN

STATE ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTIONS. IN ONE, THE CONGRESS REGAINED TMY SEAT, CRUSHING A JANA SANGH OPPONENENT BY 36,000 TO 11,000 VOTES. THE CONGRESS CANDIDATE LOST THE OTHER POLL, FOR A SEAT IN A DISTRICT ADJOINING UP, TO A SOCIALIST. THE CONGRESS POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT LOCAL VOTERS HAD CUT THE OPPOSITION MARGIN OF VICTORYFROM 13,000 IN 1972 TO 6,000. THE OPPOSITION PLAYED UP THE MASSIVE EFFORTS OF THE JOSHI MINISTRY TO REGAIN THE SEAT ANDPREDICTED THAT THE CONGRESS' LOSS WOULD BE REPEATED IN NEIGHBORING UP DISTRICTS NEXT MONTH.
SCHNEIDER

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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